

Message Text

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UNCLAS TORONTO 0446

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SOPN, CA
SUBJ: JOE CLARK OPENS TORY CAMPAIGN IN TORONTO WITH
A BANG

1. TORY LEADER JOE CLARK DREW OVER 3,000 PEOPLE TO A NOMINATION MEETING FOR ETOBICOKE CENTER RIDING MARCH 15 IN WHAT CAN BEST BE DESCRIBED AS THE OPENING OF THE TORY CAMPAIGN IN TORONTO. AS KEYNOTER, CLARK DREW ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSES FROM HIS AUDIENCE WHEN HE SAID THAT THE P.C.'S WOULD WIN THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION HERE IN ONTARIO AND THAT A TORY GOVERNMENT WOULD INTRODUCE "IMMEDIATE MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN SMALL BUSINESS, THE BACKBONE OF THE COUNTRY." OBSERVERS FELT CLARK'S APPEARANCE INDICATED THE TORIES BELIEVE THEY CAN TAKE ETOBICOKE'S CENTER FROM ENERGY MINISTER ALLISTER GILLESPIE, ABOUT WHOM CLARK SAID "WE'RE RUNNING HERE AGAINST A MEMBER WHO IS RUMOURED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE CABINET." CLARK NOTED GILLESPIE'S LIMITED INVOLVEMENT IN THE GAS PIPELINE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S.

2. CLARK'S SPEECH, IN PARTICULAR THE EXCERPT ABOUT THE P.C.'S WINNING THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION HERE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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ONTARIO, WAS CARRIED ON ALMOST ALL NATIONAL AND LOCAL TELEVISION NEWS PROGRAMS LATE EVENING OF MARCH 15 AND ON RADIO NEWS PROGRAMS THE MORNING OF MARCH 16. WHILE THE TORONTO GLOBE AND MAIL CARRIED COVERAGE OF CLARK PRESENTATION ON PAGE 3, TORONTO STAR HAD IT ON PAGE 4 WITH A FIVE COLUMN PICTURE AND HEADLINE.

3. ON MARCH 16, CLARK MADE MAJOR SPEECH TO PRIMROSE CLUB IN TORONTO IN WHICH HE SAID "THE GREAT DANGER FOR THE COUNTRY IS THE HIGH LEVEL OF FRUSTRATION AND THE LOW LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE." HE PLEDGED THAT IN HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE HE WOULD PUT A HIRING FREEZE ON THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE, TURN CROWN CORPORATIONS SUCH AS PETROCAN AND ELDORADO NUCLEAR TO PRIVATE SECTOR, CUT UNNECESSARY GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING AND CONSULTING AND FORCE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES TO JUSTIFY CONTINUED EXISTENCE BEFORE PARLIAMENT. HE SAID JEAN CHRETIAN MAY BE THE FIRST FINANCE MINISTER NEVER TO HAVE PRESENTED A BUDGET "BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER DOES NOT WANT THE ECONOMY GETTING IN THE WAY OF AN ELECTION."

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT WOULD BE WRONG TO OVERVALUE CLARK'S RECEPTION IN TORONTO - HE IS STILL NOT A CHARISMATIC FIGURE BY ANY IMAGINATION, THE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN MEDIA HANDLING AND THE CROWD HE ATTRACTED DOES REFLECT RECOVERY OF A GOOD BIT OF THE ACCEPTABILITY LOST DURING THE LONG "JOE WHO" PERIOD IN ONTARIO.
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